

Israel accused of bombing Kamal Adwan Hospital ICU, risking patients and doctors

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The WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus called the Israeli attacks on Kamal Adwan Hospital 'deeply worrisome' [Screen grab/AP]

Gaza City, December 23 (RHC)-- In Gaza, the director of Kamal Adwan Hospital, encircled by Israeli drones and tanks, has pleaded with the international community to intervene to protect the northern Gaza hospital as Israel ordered patients as well as hospital staff to evacuate.

The hospital remains one of the few still operational in the area, where only a handful of doctors remain to treat patients amid a severe shortage or complete depletion of essential medical supplies.

“We are now facing direct bombing of the intensive care unit again,” Dr Hussam Abu Safia said in a video statement on Saturday night, calling on the international community to protect the hospital and its 66 remaining patients as well as medical staff.

“The nursery, maternity, and all departments of the hospital are being targeted by the occupation forces with all types of weapons, including sniper fire, tank shells, and quadcopters,” he added.

“For more than an hour now, shells are raining down on us from every corner, mile, and direction.”

Al Jazeera’s Hani Mahmoud, reporting from nearby Deir el-Balah, said, “What we are seeing now is a deliberate attack on the health facility.”

“The Israeli military has ordered evacuations from the hospital, but they have also created an intimidating environment that makes people feel it’s unsafe to leave.” Mahmoud added that contact with those besieged at the hospital had been lost overnight.

Footage verified by Al Jazeera showed wounded Palestinians taking shelter in the hospital’s corridors, away from the windows, after Israeli forces opened fire on the facility. Despite that, Mahmoud said, “many injuries” were reported as bullets penetrated the walls, also damaging equipment.

Al Jazeera Arabic correspondents in Gaza also said they lost touch with journalists inside the hospital amid the ongoing assault. According to the channel, al-Awda Hospital located in the Jabalia refugee camp also came under attack.

The relentless Israeli attacks on medical facilities, including Kamal Adwan, drew a response from World Health Organization (WHO) chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, who called it “deeply worrisome”. He urged for an “immediate ceasefire” in the area that has been under siege for more than 70 days.

More than 14 months of nonstop Israeli attacks have devastated the enclave and displaced almost the entire 2.4 million of its population. More than 45,000 people, mostly children and women, have been killed in the offensive that has caused global condemnation.

Israel justifies its deadly attacks as a response to Hamas-led attacks on October 7, 2023, in which nearly 1,100 people were killed and some 250 were taken captive.

Abu Safia said Israeli forces use the pretext that the hospital is a combat zone to justify attacks on the hospital. “We hold the world responsible for what is occurring and for our repeated appeals,” he said, adding that “there seems to be no response” to the pleas from the international community.

Gaza health officials said Israel killed 34 Palestinians, including 19 since Sunday dawn, in the past 24 hours.

Al Jazeera’s Mahmoud said Gaza has evolved into “a killing box with attacks around the clock” as four children were among five killed in the Israeli attack on Jabalia on Sunday.

At least eight people, including four children, were killed in yet another attack on a school repurposed as a shelter for Palestinians displaced by the war. The Israeli military confirmed Saturday’s attack on the school, saying it targeted a Hamas “command and control center.”

Meanwhile, the humanitarian situation deteriorated in Gaza, particularly in northern areas, which has been under military siege for weeks.

In a statement on X, the World Food Programme said since the siege began in October, it has filed 101 requests with the Israeli authorities to allow delivery of food aid to northern Gaza, including to Beit Hanoon, Beit Lahiya and Jabalia, but that only three of them had been granted.

Israel has faced accusations of genocide over its blocking of aid and basic necessities to the Gaza Strip. In the latest report, Human Rights Watch said earlier this week that since October last year, Israeli authorities have “deliberately obstructed Palestinians’ access to the adequate amount of water required for survival in the Gaza Strip”.

“Over one million children, the whole population of Gaza is impacted by this war,” Rachel Cummings, Save the Children’s humanitarian director in Gaza, told Al Jazeera.

“We are seeing children deeply affected by this onslaught, but the medium and longer-term impact is terrifying,” she said. “We provide immediate alleviation of suffering, but we know that what we do is a drop in the ocean.”

The continuing attacks come even as Palestinian groups say a ceasefire deal is “closer than ever.” In a rare joint statement, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine said a ceasefire in Gaza and a captive release deal was possible provided Israel does not impose new conditions in negotiations.

On October 7 last year, Palestinian fighters took about 250 captives, of whom 96 remain in Gaza, including 34 the Israeli military says are dead.

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